
RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Correlation between Mother's Psychological Stress and Emotional and Behavioral Problems of Elementary School Age Children

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ABSTRACT

The condition of psychological stress experienced by the mother will affect the child's emotions and behaviour. Emotional and behavioral problems in children could continue to be serious disorders if they are not managed earlier. This study aims to analyze the correlation between the psychological stress of the mother and the emotional and behavioral problems of elementary school age children. This research used analytic observational research with a cross-sectional research design. The study population was students in grades I-VI at SD Negeri Surabaya and used total population sampling. The results of the study were tested with spearman's rho test, which showed that there was a relationship between the mother's psychological stress and the emotional and behavioral problems of elementary school-aged children $p\text{-value}=0.022$ ($p<0.05$) had a positive relationship. The higher the stress level experienced by the mother, the higher the level of emotional and behavioral problems experienced by the child.

KEYWORDS

Psychological stress, mental emotional, elementary school age children, mother.

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1. Introduction

Emotional and behavioral disorders in children and adolescents have become a focus of global health in the world because they are associated with functional impairment, exposure to stigma and discrimination, and even the potential for death. Global epidemiological data, 12-13% of children and adolescents suffer from mental disorders (Ronald C. Kessler et al., 2009). Data in Indonesia regarding emotional and behavioral disorders in school-age children at the national level is very difficult to find, but the 2018 Indonesian Riskesdas Report states that the number of emotional and behavioral disorders in Indonesia is 9.6%. This figure has increased compared to the results in 2013, which was 6.0%. Data in Singapore, 12.5% of children aged 6-12 years have emotional and behavioral problems (Kementerian Kesehatan RI 2019, 2019).

Emotional and behavioral problems that are not resolved will have a negative impact on children's development, especially on personality, these emotional and behavioral disorders which can be in the form of high-risk behavior (Farida & Naviati, 2014). An emotional and behavioral disorder is a condition in which children's behavior and emotions differ greatly from the behavior and emotions of other children of the same age and background, which can cause a decrease in social interactions and relationships, self-care, as well as the learning process and behavior in the classroom (Poulou, 2013).

Children are expected to grow and develop well so that they become adults who are physically, mentally, socially and emotionally healthy. As children get older, their emotional development will depend on their interactions with other people. Children will absorb every behavior, assessment and treatment of the people around them in the learning process (Yuli Candrasari, 2012).

Mentally healthy children can control their own emotions and regulate emotional expression in their social situations; on the other hand, children who experience emotional disorders will have difficulty regulating their emotions (Lusi Nuryanti, 2008).

Factors that can increase the risk of mental and emotional problems in children include; individual factors, family, life events, social, and school factors (*IDA | Masalah Kesehatan Mental Emosional Remaja*, 2013). Whenever we talk about children's mental health, the topic of discussion cannot be separated from the role of the family because the family is the first environment known to the child and plays an important role in the mental development of the child. The values instilled by parents will be more digested and embraced by children. In other words, the treatment of each family, especially parents, will be "recorded" by children and affect their emotional development, which will gradually shape their personality (Yuli Candrasari, 2012).

Research shows that psychological stress is experienced by mothers more often than by fathers (Junida, 2015). Psychological stress experienced by the mother will affect the responsibility of parents in caring for their children because parenting stress will hinder the work carried out daily and can cause problems in the growth and development of children. Parents who have children with autism spectrum disorders experience greater stress than parents who have children with other special needs (Kalalo & Setiawati, 2020). Parenting stress levels are more likely to be experienced by parents who have children at high risk of ADHD than parents who do not have children at high risk of ADHD (Setyanisa et al., 2022).

The condition of mothers with psychological stress who have children is at a critical stage of development, namely elementary school age, which at this age is the child's first school experience that determines future success or failure (Diane E. Papalia et al., 2004). This will be a stressor for parents, if parents cannot control the emotions they feel, it will be related to a higher level of psychological stress for parents, and the use of emotion regulation strategies will affect the child's emotional and mental process. Emotional and behavioral problems in children can continue to become more serious disorders, such as depression and the risk of suicide, if they are not managed early on (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2016). Based on the description above, researchers are interested in knowing the relationship between maternal psychological stress conditions and emotional and behavioral problems in school-age children. The selection of elementary schools in this study was based on previous research conducted by doctor Diana Rosemary (2020). The results of this study are expected to provide information in the development of knowledge about the relationship between parent's psychological stress conditions and emotional and behavioral problems for school-age children.

2. Methodology

This research is an observational analytical research design. A cross-sectional approach was chosen and conducted at the SD Negeri Surabaya from April to June 2022. Sampling techniques were employed with a total population sampling of 116 respondents.

Data collection techniques in this study used a questionnaire instrument. The variables in this study were divided into two, namely dependent and independent. The dependent variable in this study is the measurement of emotional and behavioral problems in children using Robert Goodman's Strength and Difficulty Questionnaire / SDQ in 1997. The independent variable in this study is measuring the level of a mother's psychological problems using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) questionnaire proposed by Cohen in 1994.

Data were analyzed by Spearman correlation analysis with statistical software. Ethical approval for this study protocol was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine Universitas Airlangga with certificate number 73 / EC / KEPK / FKUA / 2022.

3. Results and Discussion

The followings are the results of the study :

3.1 Overview of Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 describes the frequency distribution of the research respondents' variables. The sex distribution of most children is female, with a total of 56.9% (66 respondents) compared to 43.1% male (50 respondents). The distribution of the maternal age category is the category of the age group <40 years with a total of 56.9% (66 respondents), while the age group >40 years is 43.1% (50 respondents). The distribution of the number of children owned by the mother is at most <2 children, 62.1% (72 respondents), while >2 children are 37.9% (44 respondents).

The most recent distribution of maternal education is Senior High School 69% (80 respondents), Junior High School 16.4% (19 respondents), Elementary School 7.8% (9 respondents), Bachelor's Degree 5.2% (6 respondents), and Associate Degree 1.7% (2 respondents). The highest distribution of mothers' occupations was as housewives 79.3% (92 respondents), followed by working as private employees 13.8% (16 respondents), self-employed 6% (7 respondents), and laborers 0.9% (1 respondent).

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Respondent Characteristic

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	50	43.1
Female	66	56.9
Age Group of Mother		
<40	66	56.9
>40	50	43.1
Number of Children		
<2	72	62.1
>2	44	37.9
Mother's Education		
Elementary School	9	7.8
Junior High School	19	16.4
Senior High School	80	69
Associate Degree	2	1.7
Bachelor Degree	6	5.2
Mother's Job		
Housewife	92	79.3
Private employee	16	13.8
Entrepreneur	7	6
Laborer	1	0.9
Total	116	100

3.2 Mother's Psychological Stress Level

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Mother's Psychological Stress Level

Stress Level	(n)	(%)
Mild	31	26,7
Moderate	71	61,2
Severe	14	12,1
Total	116	100.0

Table 2 shows the results of research on a total of 116 respondents showing that as many as 61.2% of respondents experienced moderate stress, and 12.1% experienced severe stress.

3.3 Emotional and Behavioral Problems in Children

Table 3 shows the results of the study showing that as many as 98 (84.5%) children did not experience mental-emotional disorders, but there were some children with abnormal results, which meant that 5 (4.3%). Distribution is based on a power scale with the domain of prosocial behavior within normal limits of 88.8% (103 respondents).

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of the level of the child's emotional and mental problems

Characteristics	f	%
Mental emotional problems		
Normal	98	84,5
Borderline	13	11,2
Abnormal	5	4,3
Prosocial behaviour		
Normal	103	88,8
Borderline	10	8,6

Abnormal	3	2,6
Emotional symptoms		
Normal	80	69
Borderline	12	10,3
Abnormal	24	20,7
Hyperactivity/inattention		
Normal	105	90,5
Borderline	5	4,3
Abnormal	6	5,2
Conduct problems		
Normal	78	67,2
Borderline	18	15,5
Abnormal	20	17,2
Peer relationship problems		
Normal	82	70,7
Borderline	12	10,3
Abnormal	22	19

Distribution is based on a difficulty scale that is assessed from several domains, namely hyperactivity problems, emotional symptoms problems, behavioral problems, and peer relationship problems. The majority of the scores for each domain were in the normal category, but there were several domains in the abnormal category, mostly problems with emotional symptoms followed by problems with peers, conduct problems, and hyperactivity problems.

3.4 The Correlation of Mother's Psychological Stress with Emotional and Behavioral Problems of Elementary School Age Children

The results of the research using the Spearman correlation test showed that there was a significant correlation between the variables PSS and SDQ on the difficulty scale, as evidenced by the p-value <0.05.

Table 4. Correlation between Mother's Psychological Stress Conditions and Mental Emotional Problems of Elementary School Age Children

		SDQ (Strength Score)	SDQ (Difficulties Score)
Spearman's rho	PSS	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	.033
		<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	.725
		N	116

The strength of the relationship between the two variables can be seen from the number of correlation coefficients obtained by 0.212. Based on statistical interpretation, this means that it has a positive level of relationship. A positive relationship between the two variables means that the higher the PSS, the higher the SDQ.

4. Discussion

This study found that the highest level of maternal psychological stress was moderate to mild stress, but there were some mothers who experienced severe stress. This is in line with research conducted by Tri Nathalia Palupi; it was found that the highest maternal stress was moderate to mild stress when accompanying elementary school children while studying at home during the COVID-19 pandemic (Palupi, 2021). Psychological stress is the result of an event or series of experiences that are interpreted negatively and make the mother unable to deal with it (Dian Ibung, 2008). The discrepancy between expectations and reality creates a stressful situation for the mother. Stress is caused by a mismatch of perceptions between environmental demands and abilities (Edward P. Sarafino & Timothy W. Smith, 2012). Stressors can be related to work, education, number of children and maternal age.

The education level of the mother in this study, the majority of respondents had low education (Elementary School, Junior High School, Senior High School). This study is in line with Januwarsih showing that there is a relationship between stress and education level (Januwarsih & Triastuti, 2020).

The level of education affects whether individuals easily experience stress or not. The higher the level of education, the control of stressors is better; better education means better knowledge because a person's level of education also affects him. The level of education will determine a person's in dealing with stressors (Akhmad Mukhlis & Sadid Al Muqim, 2013).

A person's level of education is related to that person's ability to absorb information and manage it into knowledge. The level of education also determines whether or not a person easily absorbs and understands the knowledge he acquires; in general, the higher a person's education, the better his knowledge (Soekidjo Notoatmodjo, 2005). Rochmah stated that the higher an individual's education level, the easier it is to receive information and communication can be effectively and easily applied so that a lot of knowledge is possessed. On the other hand, a lack of education will hinder the development of mothers' attitudes towards newly recognized values (Lailatul Rochmah et al., 2019).

As the results in this study show that the majority of respondents are housewives, the mother's employment status has an impact on stress. These results are supported by the research of Pirous and Ardiana that stress is experienced by working mothers compared to mothers who do not work; in addition to work dependents at home that demand to be completed, office work also demands to be completed so that it adds to the burden of time, thoughts and energy for working mother. Mothers who do not work tend to be less stressed because the pressure and demands are sourced only in the household environment. Individuals can focus more on one activity, namely household work, such as taking care of children and husbands, and doing all household matters so that mothers can better manage their time and energy to complete their tasks at home properly. Triggers of stress in mothers who do not work usually occur because of their limited and routine activities at home (Apreviadizy & Puspitacandri, 2014).

The results of this study are not in line with research (Chairini, 2013), showing the results that the majority of mothers who do not work experience stress compared to working mothers. Working mothers have a better effort to manage the stress caused by parenting during the pandemic compared to mothers who do not work. Working mothers have other activities besides taking care of children, so they are not bored with the routine of taking care of children and the house (Sihombing, 2021).

In this study, the majority of the mother's ages ranged from 20-40 years. This study is similar to research (Rudianto, 2020), which suggests that the majority who experience stress are aged less than <35 years. This period is also a period of productive age for women. Developmental tasks at this stage are centered on social expectations and include finding a job, choosing a partner, learning to live with a spouse, starting a family, raising children, managing a household, accepting responsibilities, becoming a citizen and joining society (Monks et al., 2004). In addition, someone who has older age has lower stress than someone who is younger because they have more experience and are able to control their emotions.

This is not in line with the research conducted by Maraqa, which showed the same results as the study, which did not show a relationship between age and the incidence of stress during the pandemic. The mother's age is in the early adult age range, which is expected to have maturity in attitude and thinking. This can affect the mother in response to stressors (Maraqa et al., 2020).

The results of this study indicate that the majority of respondents are mothers who have children of the female gender. This is in line with the opinion of Little, 2002 that when viewed from the gender of the child, mothers of boys experience greater stress than mothers of girls. This happens because there is a relationship between the sex of the child and the interaction of the parents (Little, 2002).

A mother's involvement (such as mother-daughter interactions) with daughters is greater than that of a mother with sons (McBride et al., 2002), and a mother's involvement (such as mother-daughter interactions) can cause mothers to experience stress (Mulsow et al., 2002). However, this is contrary to Bania Maulina's research that stress on mothers who have children with mental retardation with a daughter's gender is greater than stress on mothers who have children with mental retardation with a son's gender (Maulina, 2017).

The results showed that the majority of school-age children did not experience emotional or mental disorders, namely in the normal category on the difficulty scale, but there were some children who experienced emotional or mental disorders, namely in the abnormal category. The types of problems that are most often shown are problems with emotional symptoms and problems with peers. This study is in line with a study conducted by (Koskelainen et al., 2000) on Finnish adolescents using the SDQ instrument reported that Finnish adolescents are at risk for emotional and mental problems because the results of the study show that Finnish adolescents have high levels of emotional problems and behavioral problems. The difference between the respondents in this study is school-age children.

The emotional symptoms assessed by the SDQ are seen as symptoms of stress, anxiety, fear, nervousness and feelings of unhappiness. This is in accordance with research conducted by Indri Kemala that stress levels in children and adolescents occur due to many factors, but the most common factors are family, academics and peers (Nasution, 2008). In line with research conducted by Gonzales that there are 2 factors that influence behavioral problems, namely environmental factors such as family, friends, and teachers and individual factors such as genetics and gender (Saudino, 2005).

Other factors that affect emotional and mental health are individual characteristics and behavior factors, social and economic circumstances and environmental factors. Environmental factors can come from the family, one of which is maternal psychological

stress. One of the factors of maternal psychological stress is at work; in this study, the majority of respondents were housewives. This is also in line with Rani's research (2019) which revealed that children of working mothers experience emotional deprivation because their mothers cannot provide good love and affection due to lack of time and work pressure; it affects the attachment to the mother, which is a basic need for the emotional maturity of the child (Rani, 2019). In addition, the mother's education level is also a factor in children's emotional and mental disorders; this is in line with research by Nursalam and Nawir (2018) on people who live in the Caile Environment, which explains that the education level of parents is very decisive in shaping the child's personality in the family, the pattern communication of highly educated parents with low education has an influence on the formation of the child's personality, the higher the level of parental education, the better in shaping the child's personality and the better the pattern of communication carried out (Nursalam & Muhammad Nawir, 2018). Research in Munich, Germany, that examined the parental education variable did not separately mention low parental education as the strongest risk factor in relation to children's mental health (Perna et al., 2010).

In this study, the majority of respondents had children of the female sex. This is not in line with Weiss' research with measurements using the "Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire" questionnaire for emotional problems; it was found that the female sex had a stronger relationship than the male gender, while as a comparison on the measurement with the "Child Behavioral Checklist" questionnaire or behavioral questionnaire. Boys were found to have higher scores. A study of 591 primary school-age children in Vietnam showed that there was a significant relationship between mental and emotional disorders and gender. Previous research has shown that there are no consistent results on the relationship between the sex of the child and mental-emotional disorders (Weiss et al., 2014).

National studies in Germany show that there is a significant relationship between gender and mental and emotional disorders. Mild to moderate depressive symptoms showed that the female sex had a more significant relationship than men, while in behavioral problems, the male gender is more significant than the female (Sauer et al., 2014).

Based on the results of research conducted, there is a relationship between psychological stress conditions experienced by mothers with mental and emotional problems of elementary school age children. There are several factors that can affect the level of maternal psychological stress related to mental and emotional problems of school-age children, including the mother's occupation, the mother's last education, the mother's age, the number of children and the sex of the child. Related to the work of mothers in this study, most of them are housewives; this is in line with research conducted by Brooks that someone who interacts with children every day and carries out parenting work that tends to be monotonous can cause psychological stress because they have to put the interests of children and family first coupled with the child has mental problems (Jane Brooks, 2011). As a result, the stress condition experienced by the mother has a negative impact on the emotional maturity of the child, so he experiences mental and emotional problems.

The majority of mothers' education levels in this study were low, which is in line with research which revealed that low parental education levels were associated with poor parenting attitudes towards children due to a lack of parental knowledge about raising children (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2017). This poor parenting can increase children's mental and emotional problems. This is also a burden for a mother and can cause stress when elementary school-aged children have higher academic demands than before and will continue to increase according to the child's age (Sotardi, 2017). If the mother's level of education is high, she is able to have better knowledge and planning skills so that she can manage stressful emotions and behavior when facing pressure or dealing with problems.

The role of a parent can also be stressful, especially for a mother who is at greater risk in her role as a parent. This adaptation for mothers who are relatively young can cause stress in their role in caring for school-age children because they do not have enough experience and require more specialized skills, so they are more susceptible to stress (Amalia et al., 2022).

Regarding the average number of children owned by respondents in this study, it is related to the stress condition of the mother because the more children, the higher the level of stress felt with mental problems owned by the child. The attachment of a mother to her son and daughter is certainly different; this is also the cause of the mother experiencing stress. A mother's involvement in daughters tends to be greater than that of sons. This also causes differences in the emotional closeness felt by mothers and children.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results above, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between maternal psychological stress and mental-emotional problems for elementary school-aged children on a difficulty scale. The condition of psychological stress experienced by the mother is mostly moderate stress, but there are some mothers who experience severe stress. Most of the children's mental emotional problems on the difficulty scale in the SDQ questionnaire were in the normal category, but there were still some children in the abnormal category.

5.1 Corrections :

The condition of psychological stress experienced by mothers is moderate stress (61.2%). Most of the respondents did not experience stress, but there were some mothers who did still under a lot of stress. Psychological stress is experienced; there are several factors and other influences related to the mother's last education, the mother's occupation, the number of children they have, and the age of the mother. Mental-emotional problems of children on the difficulty scale in the SDQ questionnaire are in the normal category, but there are still some children in the abnormal category. The difficulty scale has aspects including emotional symptoms, behavioral problems, hyperactivity problems, and relationship problems with peers. There is a relationship between the psychological stress conditions of the mother and the mental problems of emotional school-age children, which have a positive relationship level. That relationship positive means when the psychological stress experienced by the mother increases, then the mental emotional problems of the child also increase.

For the readers, it is recommended to pay attention to the psychological state of stress hit so as not to take it out on the child so that the child does not experience emotional mental problems because parents who feel depressed by personal problems. Providing education about stressors that cause psychological stress for the mother can minimise the mental emotional problems of school age children. For the next researcher, this research is only limited to psychological stress conditions of mothers and school-aged children's emotional mental problems alone, so it's necessary to conduct a more in-depth study of other factors that influence stress mother's psychological and other factors mental emotional problems of school-age children as well develop better research by using the population wider. The researcher also suggests conducting research in other areas so that the results obtained describe the conditions that actually.

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